turns, as we listened to stories of pussy conquests, petty scams, and recent ass kickings. The conversation was dominated by the older boys, who by turn tried to impart fragments of street warrior knowledge to us. We were sitting and standing, absorbing all this, relaxing our tough postures, allowing a communal trust to put us at ease and make us glib and attentive.

Crip was standing. I was sitting. It happened that from where I sat I could eye his crotch with a slight upward shift of my eyes. Well, one of the times that I peeked, Crip caught me. I would soon discover that I had cruised into very dangerous territory. Lulled by the conversation, I had allowed myself to become intoxicated on the blossoming masculinity surrounding me. I might as well have been shooting semen from wet dreams straight into my veins for the high I was on in this gathering of males.

Instantly, Crip jumped forward and got in my face. "I see you looking at my dick!" he hurled at me. I felt as though he had accused me of breaking into his house and violating his mother. Immediately, all conversation ceased and all eyes focused on me and Crip.

"Do you wanna suck my big, Black dick, muthafucka?" he demanded, clutching his crotch and moving up into my face. "Do you, nigga?"

Thank God my instincts told me to stand up. It was this defensive posture that perhaps saved me from an *absolute* humiliation, but my "No" was weak.

"Well, why are you looking at my dick? Is you a freak? You must wanna suck it. Are you a faggot? You can suck it, baby," he mockingly cooed, still clutching what was more than a handful of cock.

The fellas were laughing and slapping palms all around by this time. I was becoming visibly angry, but I had still uttered nothing more than a meek "No" to his challenge. I then remembered my mother's bedroom windows; they were open; she must have heard him.

The laughter began to die down. The sexual tension in the air was palpable enough to be slapped around. Crip's attitude changed for the worse.

"You shouldn't be looking at a muthafucka's dick unless you plan to suck it," he sneered. It now seemed that all along he had been bellowing at me, so I was even more convinced my mother had heard him.

"Are you funny, nigga?" he asked, deadly serious, which elicited more raucous laughter from the fellas.

"No," I said, attempting to put more conviction in my voice. Crip was but an inch or two taller than me, and a pretty Black male. He carried beauty as agilely as some Black men carry footballs and basketballs and pride. I was surely attracted to him, but to even have hinted at that would have cost me more than the humiliation I endured that night.

So there we stood, me surrounded by gales of laughter punctuated by his booming voice, and all the time, in the back of my mind, I believe my mother was listening, in shock, hearing my humiliation. To her credit, if she overheard this she never confronted me with it.

Crip finally ended his tirade. The conversation resumed its boisterous, brash bravado. Shortly thereafter, I excused myself from the fellas, crossed the street, locked the door behind me, and cried myself to sleep in my bed. It would not be the last time I would cry myself to sleep because a male had inflicted me with emotional pain. It would not be the last time I would lock the door behind me and go to my bed alone, frightened of my sexuality and the desires I could not then speak of or name as clearly as I could articulate the dangers.

My sexual encounters with George ceased several weeks before summer vacation ended. In retrospect, I believe I stopped visiting him at the store and at his home as a direct result of the humiliation I suffered from Crip. I must have thought it would only be a matter of time before we would be discovered. Whatever my reasons, my refusal to engage